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Department of State TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL 246

PAGE 01 SAIGON 18431 201952Z

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ACTION EA-20

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-08 L-04 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20 USIA-12 AID-28 RSR-01
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R 200950Z NOV 73
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8227
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL DA NANG

EMBOFF

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CGC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Zgulicz DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

Saigon 18431 11/20/73

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 18431

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 4)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

Pol 14 Viet S

SUBJ: BIG MINHS CANDIDACY

Pol 2 Viet S

REF: A. STATE 188018 B. SAIGON 18204 C. SAIGON 17990
D. SAIGON 17618 Pol 2 Viet S

1. GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH'S INTERVIEW WITH AFP (REF B) HAS SO FAR BEEN THE ONLY OUTRIGHT PUBLIC STATEMENT HE HAS MADE AS TO HIS CANDIDACY. FELIX BOLLO OF AFP INSISTS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE, AND STATES MINH CLEARED THE TEXT BEFORE IT WAS DESPATCHED. THE MOST POSITIVE PUBLIC STATEMENT MINH HAD MADE UNTIL THEN WAS AT THE AN QUANG PAGODA ON NOVEMBER 1 WHEN IN RESPONSE TO BADGERING BY REPORTERS MINH SAID: "I AM READY." SINCE THEN EVERYONE HAS ASSUMED MINH A FULL CANDIDATE, AND ACCORDINGLY AFP STORY DID NOT MAKE MUCH SPLASH.

2. [redacted] MAINTAINED TO EMBOFF HE [redacted] MINH MADE HIS ANNOUNCEMENT THROUGH AFP BECAUSE HE COULD NOT TRUST LOCAL PRESS TO REPORT STORY

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CORRECTLY. SPEAKING WITH SHUSTER OF THE NY TIMES IN A PRIVATE INTERVIEW OF ABOUT THE SAME DATE, MINH ACTED FULLY LIKE A CANDIDATE BUT WOULD NOT SAY FOR PUBLICATION THAT HE WAS ONE.

3. BOTH FORMER LT. GEN. MAI HUU XUAN, WHO WAS AT MINH'S NOVEMBER 1 RECEPTION, AND THE KNOWLEDGEABLE AN QUANG LAY LEADER SENATOR TRAN QUANG THUAN HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT AT THE RECEPTION MINH ANNOUNCED PRIVATELY TO HIS GUESTS THAT HE WAS INDEED A CANDIDATE.

4. EMBASSY'S BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT NGUYEN VAN TUOI, PUBLISHER OF VIET-NAM GUARDIAN, AUTHORED MINH'S NOVEMBER 1 DECLARATION. TUOI IS ALSO SOURCE FOR REPORT (REF C) THAT MINH IS ASSEMBLYING THE "NUCLEUS" OF A CAMPAIGN STAFF. HOWEVER, TUOI AND OTHER MINH INTIMATES EVADE ALL QUESTIONS ON THE SPECIFICS OF STAFFING AND PLANNING. ACCORDINGLY, WE SUSPECT THAT "NUCLEUS" OF STAFF CONSISTS OF MINH' USUAL COTERIE: RETIRED LT. GEN. LE VAN KIM; NGUYEN NGOC THO, FORMER PREMIER IN THE MINH GOVERNMENT NOVEMBER 1963 TO JANUARY 1964; NGUYEN VAN TUOI; FORMER SENATOR TRAN VAN DON; AND ON THE FRINGES FORMER LT. GEN. MAI HUU XUAN AND OPPOSITIONIST LAWYER TRAN NGOC LIENG, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FORCE AND FORMER JUSTICE MINISTER IN THE KY WAR CABINET AUGUST 1965 TO NOVERMBER 1967. WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATION MINH HAS EXPANDED HIS ADVISORS BEYOND THIS GROUP OF LONG-TIME COMRADES OR PREPARED YET A CAMPAIGN PLAN AND PLATFORM ANY MORE SPECIFIC THAN HIS NOVEMBER 1 PUBLIC DECLARATION.
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